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An Analytical Study on the Utility of Meditation for Student Life

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Abstract

The 21st century has made student life more difficult and multifaceted, imposing a number of different pressures upon students: competitive examination systems, technological distraction, social media influence, family expectations, and unpredictability of the future, which influence the psychological wellbeing and academic results of students in a great number. The study examines the role of Buddhist meditation and the practices that have been reported in the *Tipitaka* in the treatment of mental health issues and improvement of academic performance in students. The research methodology is qualitative research, as the primary sources are the Pali Canonical texts (*Dīghanikaya, Majjhima nikaya, Saṃyuttanikaya*, and *Aṅguttaranikaya*) and the secondary

sources are contemporary neuroscientific researches and psychological works. The study investigates meditation practices, including *SatipatthAna* (four foundations of mindfulness), *ÔnApAnasati* (mindfulness of breathing), *MettAnussati* (loving-kindness meditation) and *Samatha-VipassanA* (tranquility and insight meditation) through systematic literature review and thematic analysis. Results have shown that the practices can make a great deal of contribution in enhancing attention and concentration as well as emotional control, working memory capacity, and general mental health. Meditation is a neuroimaging studies that reveal structural and functional changes in the brain and support an increase in prefrontal cortex activity, decreased amygdala activity, and increased attention networks. The study concludes that not only does meditation have short-term effects but also life-long competencies such as emotional intelligence, self-regulation, resilience and interpersonal competencies that are crucial in the growth of a whole student. The practical tips on how to apply meditation in everyday student life and the recommendations on how to incorporate meditation in the Sri Lankan education

systems are offered, and meditation is set as a vital life skill of modern and future generations of learners.

Keywords: academic performance, Buddhist meditation, loving-kindness meditation, meditation, mental health of students

Introduction

The life of the students today in the 21st century has been made extremely complex and burdensome than ever before. The modern education system is susceptible to having a large number of students who are subjected to multifaceted social and spiritual pressures at once. The competitiveness of the examination system, the speedy changes in technologies, the influence of social media, the high expectations of parents, the unpredictability of the economic environment, and strong fears of the future have had a severe toll on the psychological well-being of the students. The recent statistics of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) state that a considerable part of the world youth community is facing mental health

problems, which keeps growing on a daily basis. In particular, anxiety, depression, excessive stress, lack of concentration, and emotional instability are the conditions that have increased significantly among students.

This is an issue that is especially acute in the Sri Lankan educational setting. The pressure of the technological age, the overwhelming educational availability, the load of social demands, and the pressures of intense competition in the G.C.E. Advanced Level examinations and university admission compel students to highly stressful situations (Perera and Fonseka, 2020, pp. 78-85). Most students have an approximate of 12-14 hours of academic life per day and as a result, they lack proper sleep and rest. This backfires on both physical health, mental wellbeing as well as the quality of life.

As technology and social media have become an essential part and parcel of the contemporary student life, it is usually rather a curse than a blessing. Constantly aware students, social comparison, cyberbullying, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and unhealthy screen time distract the students, harm their mental health (Gunawardena,

2019, pp. 23-34). Besides, the exposure to explicit material via the social media results in the reduction of self-esteem, loss of self-confidence and anxiety over the long term.

The students encounter these complicated challenges which cannot be resolved by traditional solutions. Even though medicinal therapies, psychological interventions, and mental health interventions are significant, these interventions tend to address the symptoms but not the causes of the problem. Buddhist meditation approaches, in this case, are critical as a comprehensive therapeutic and prevention measure.

Buddhist meditation is a very old but scientifically proven philosophy on the systematic practice of mental purity, concentration, cognisance and wisdom (DN 2, 2004, p. 312). Meditation techniques like *SatipatthAna*, *ÔnApAnasati*, *MettA*, *Samatha*, and *VipassanA* meditation techniques taught by the Buddha more than 2,600 years ago are not a religious ritual but a practical form of mental training, which can be effectively applied to the modern society. These practices are aimed at an in-depth study of the mind-body relationship, mindfulness,

emotion control, and wisdom about reality. Meditation stands out as a particularly handy psychological tool that is extremely helpful among students in the contemporary competitive school environment (Wijesinghe, 2018, pp. 45-52).

Meditation is not only a technique to overcome stress but a means of changing the whole life. It is an empowerment that teaches students to monitor their thoughts and feelings as well as physical sensations to develop the ability to be responsive and less reactive. Such abilities do not only increase academic effectiveness but also allow students to defend their mental health, relationships and address the life issues creatively.

Modern neuroscience and psychology have scientifically shown the benefits of meditation. It has been proved that meditation has structural and functional changes on brain as presented in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans and functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) scans. Research has established that brain regions involved in attention, memory, emotional control and wisdom are improved in case of a meditation practice

(Davidson et al., 2003, pp. 564-570). It is a twentieth century scientific validation of the inmost wisdom of the Buddha.

The research seeks to establish the complexities of the student life in detail and examine scientifically and practically how Buddhist meditation techniques can be a comprehensive and a long-term solution to the challenges. This paper aims to present the view that meditation is a key to the success and wellbeing of the 21 st century student by combining the *Tipitaka*, the contemporary scientific research and practical experiences.

Research Problem

The research Problem of the study is: How may the methodologies of Buddhist meditation help to address the mental health problems that are experienced in the life of students and improve the efficiency of the academic performance?

The issues of mental health and academic problems among students in the contemporary education system are growing day in day out. The students in Sri Lanka

and other parts of the world have reported increased stress and anxiety, sleep deprivation, lack of concentration, and emotional instability. It is possible to distinguish several major reasons that cause the aggravation of the given issue: the system of competition through examination is overly stressful, and the constant use of the social media and technologies disturbs the attention span. Moreover, sleep deprivation and improper lifestyle prevent psychological health. Along with these, high parental expectations, social inequalities, and economic difficulties are also a great threat to the mental health of students.

Research Objectives

The following are the main objectives of this study:

- To determine the meditation methodologies cited in the *Tripitaka* and examine the key features of the methodologies.
- To examine, in addition to contemporary scientific data, the practical effect of meditation on the psychological health and academic performance of students.

- To make appropriate recommendations to practise implementation among students who apply meditation techniques like *SatipatthAna ÔnApAnasati* and *Metta* meditations.
- To determine the long-term effects of meditation on the success of the student life in general.

Research Methodology

The research methodology that followed in this study is mostly qualitative research with both primary and secondary data sources. The *Tripitaka* as the primary sources of data, i.e., the meditation practices and the discourses with the benefit aspect, in the *Dighanikaya*, the *Majjhima nikaya, the Samyutta nikaya*, and the *Anguttara nikaya*, are examined carefully. And post canonical texts such as commentaries as *Visuddhimagga* are also consulted. Modern psychological research, academic journal articles, scientific research on Neuroscience and Meditation, and research carried out in the context of the Sri Lankan setting served as the sources of secondary data and are analysed. The method

of analysis is the literature review method and Thematic Analysis, which is utilized to determine the correlations between aforementioned meditation methods in *Tripitaka* and modern scientific results.

Literature Review

Students in the modern educational setting are challenged by various mental and physical problems. Among the main problems of student life, the academic pressure, anxiety during exams, difficulties with time management and emotional instability are pointed out. In this respect, meditation has found a lot of scholarly literature talking about how the meditation can be used as an effective way of improving the general well-being of the students. In the analysis of practical contribution of Buddhist meditative methodologies in alleviating problems like stress, exam phobia and lack of concentration, theoretical and practical knowledge available in the 1st hand writings of local and international scholars is of critical importance.

In the traditional book "The Path of Buddhist Meditation" (1990) Rerukane Chandawimala Thero offers detailed analysis of tranquillity (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassana*) meditation practices in Theravada tradition. According to him, getting mental concentration or *SamAdhi* involves suppression of the Five Hindrances (*Pancha Nivarana*: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and skeptical doubt). He notes that the use of *Samatha* meditation is quite effective in checking sleepiness, laziness and unsettled mind which tends to frustrate the student in his studies. According to the book, the one who develops the skill of keeping the mind focused on one thing enhances memory and analysis. Chandawimala Thero points out that meditation is not a religious practice only but a scientific practice of being mentally trained. The work also elaborates how the recognition of the impermanence of mind and matter that comes with *Vipassana* can help students face their failures or other challenges that they might be facing without letting their minds break down.

In his book What the Buddha Taught published in 1959, in the chapter Meditation or Mental Culture, Walpola Rahula Thero gives a modernist explanation of the way meditation must be applied to everyday life, and that the common mythology is wrong. Rahula Thero believes that Buddhist meditation is not just a way of escaping life but a life-long deep, attentive experience. He shows how *SatipatthAna* (mindfulness) can be applied during classroom and seeing the study sessions, as well as writing exams, by a student. He stresses that by remaining conscious of postures with the help of *KAyAnupassanA* and discovering the presence of thought of lust, hatred, or delusion with the help of *CittAnupassanA* one develops self-discipline. This writing established a discourse of new Buddhist psychology in the Western world, and it gives a rational basis of enhancing efficiency of education by practical application of mindfulness exercises.

In this paper, Chandima Wijebandara in Buddhist Psychology and Counselling (2004) offers a learned study in finding solutions to student problems by

amalgamating the Buddhist doctrine about psychology and the contemporary use of psychological counselling. Wijebandara claims that when a student is diagnosed with a personality type according to the Buddhist characterizations (*Carita*: lustful, hateful, deluded, faithful, intellectual, and speculative) and advised practicing a particular method of meditation, the results are extremely successful in the educational counselling. As an example, *MettA* (loving-kindness) meditation is suggested to students who are easily angry (*Dosa Carita*), and *ÔnApAnasati* (mindfulness of breathing) is better suited to students who have minds that are scattered (*Vitakka Carita*). The book establishes that Buddhist counselling technique of seeing things the way they are and not the way they should be (Yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa) could be utilized to deal with exam anxiety and social phobia, which shares the similarities with the current-day Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Katukurunde Nyanananda Thero, in The Mind and Meditation (1998) gives an extensive philosophical and psychological account of the mental processes and the

regulation of Papañca (mental proliferation). He asserts that students tend not to be victims of external problems, but rather victims of the Mental Proliferation that they impose on themselves about the external problems. He explains meditation as an art of stopping this chain and re-establishing the present moment. The book turns to profound discourses such as the *Mula Pariyaya Sutta* to highlight the benefits of the learning process in regard to correcting perceptual errors resulting in more accurate and efficient learning. Such exercises will help the student to clear the mind and concentrate on the information he/she needs to know about.

In the article, Meditation to a Peaceful Mind (2012) Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero, provides a practical guide to applying simple meditation to the everyday issues in life. According to him, the modern competitive education should include *Metta* meditation to handle jealousy, competition, and pressure between students. Emotional Intelligence, which is developed by means of loving-kindness, helps the students to be more likely to establish a good relationship both with the teachers and

classmates. According to the book, *MaranAnussati* (mindfulness of death) may also be used in helping the students to realize the importance of time and prevent procrastination. He talks in straightforward terms that meditation is a way of life, which is used in schools, buses and homes as a form of mind control.

In their 2017 article Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body, Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson introduce a breakthrough source of experimental evidence into the neurological nature of meditation. They claim that meditation is not a momentary shift of calmness, but can also be a variation of the character that permanently alters the structure and functioning of the brain. Their study demonstrates that the practice in the long term enhances the functionality of the Prefrontal Cortex which has a direct impact on learning, decision-making as well as sustained attention. It also scientifically demonstrates that deactivation of the Amygdala makes students steady and calm when exam time comes. The authors emphasize that meditation via the concept of Neuroplasticity creates

new neural networks and improves memory and cognitive functions.

In Full Catastrophe Living (1990), Jon Kabat-Zinn establishes the principle of MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction); founded on *SatipatthAna* of Buddhism. The argument that Kabat-Zinn makes concerns the impossibility to control the catastrophes of life (exam and social pressures), but it is possible to change the approach towards them, by means of meditation. He highlights such techniques as the Body Scan to get rid of accumulated tension, as well as the training in Being Present. This approach is important to students because it offers them a scientific approach, beyond a religious structure, which results into a more productive and healthy life.

The literature review above shows clearly that meditation is a multidimensional process, which has several benefits in relation to the life of students. Its authenticity can be proven from ancient Buddhist knowledge to the recent findings of Neuroscience, where both local and global

research supports the idea that meditation boosts many of the student well-being aspects.

Discussion

Problems of Student Life and Meditation

There are a number of major problems that define the contemporary student life. These are stress of exam, stiff competition, and academic demands, technological changes, social media supremacy, sleep deprivation, unbalanced food intake, inactivity and deep uncertainty of the future. These struggles have a devastating effect on the physical and psychological health of students, ruining their academic performance, social interactions, and the overall quality of life processes.

The pressure to pass examination is especially high in the Sri Lankan educational background. The restricted opportunities of entering university, high stakes A-Level system, and extreme competition subjects students to extreme stress. According to a lot of students, the exam time is associated with high levels of psychological

pressure, anxiety, panic attacks, sleep deprivation, and psychosomatic symptoms (Wijesinghe, 2018, pp. 45-67). Since students are commonly tested only based on the exam scores, their self-esteem and self-worth are also unhealthily attributed to the exam scores, thus they experience serious depression when they fail.

The social media and the prevalence of technology are a challenge to the generation that is different. Always-on notifications in the smartphone, social media, streaming services, and online gaming make studies a challenge. Social comparison, cyberbullying, excessive screen time, and others like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) are highly detrimental in regard to mental health (Gunawardena, 2019, pp. 23-34). Instagram, Tik Tok, and Facebook promote the so-called perfect lifestyles, which leads to the feeling of a lowered self-esteem in relation to the objective reality. Moreover, the bad habit of doomscrolling and the problem of notification addiction impedes healthy lifestyles.

Meditation through Holistic Solutions

SatipatthAna Meditation is very effective as a response to such complicated issues. Students are taught to be highly conscious of their bodies through Mindfulness of the Body (*KAyAnupassana*). Physical tension can be removed by determining where it is concentrated in the shoulder, neck, jaw, or abdomen, and utilizing conscious attention. Such practices as *ÔnApAnasati*, Mindfulness of Postures (mindfulness of sitting, standing, walking, or lying down) and Mindfulness of Body Parts develop an insight into the connection between the body and the mind (Gnanavimala Thero, 2016, pp. 89-112).

VedanAnupassanA (Mindfulness of Feelings) cultivates the capacity to notice pleasant, painful and neutral feelings increasing the response capacity instead of the reactive capacity. When students are subjected to unpleasant experiences, like failing an exam, being subjected to blunt criticism and social rejection, they usually respond with anger, frustration, self-loathing or even extreme stress. In this meditation, they can perceive this pain not as theirs or themselves but as something

impermanent, shifting, and unselfish (*Anatta*) to respond in a less harmful way (Dhammaratana Thero, 2019, pp. 145-167).

CittAnupassana (Mindfulness of the Mind) helps one to develop the skill of taking note of different states of mind like lust, hatred, delusion, anxiety, anger and envy. This is essential to Emotional Regulation. In cases where the students name their emotions (emotion wellbeing), the strength of their emotions in influencing automatic behaviour is reduced. Replacing the anxiety with the statement Anxiety in the mind is an emotional distancing that is an effective regulation technique. Mindfulness decreases the amygdala and enhances the prefrontal cortex, which constitutes the neural mechanism of emotional regulation (Gotink et al., 2016, pp. 213-225).

With the help of *DhammAnupassanA*, the knowledge of the nature of reality (*Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta*) enables students to become creative to matters in life. The wisdom of the *Anicca* vision is this, that this too shall come to pass. The understanding that the failures or failed relationships are temporary brings about the long-

term well-being. Ego-based suffering is minimized by the vision of *Anatta* by lessening overindulgence in the ideas of the self, the idea of I and the idea of mine (Somaratne, 2015, pp. 178-203).

The given practice of *ÔnApAnasati* is especially helpful when it comes to building focus and concentration as the fundamental attributes of academic work (Herath and Priyadarshani, 2016, pp. 78-91). In the multitasking society where students are bombarded with phones, laptops, tablets, message alerts, and notifications, being able to remain focused on one activity is essential. Sustained attention, selective attention and attention switching are formed in this meditation.

Loving-Kindness Meditation (Mett*A*) is important to establish good relations and self-love. Students who are competitive usually perceive other students as their enemies and this culminates in jealousy and social isolation. Social bonds are enhancing in the practice of May all beings be free of enmity, free of suffering, and may they find happiness (Dhammananda, 2015, pp. 45-62). It is necessary to start with oneself because the

ability to accept oneself as limited and not to define oneself by the results of examinations are key to being mentally healthy.

Neurological Evidence

The neuroscience studies of today have revealed quite categorically that meditation produces neuroplastic changes in the brain, which are both structural and functional. In a study carried out by Lazar et al. (2005), it was established that meditation, when conducted over a long period, enhances the thickness of the cerebral cortex, namely in attention, interoception, and sensory processing. It also retards the age-related cortical thinning.

The effect of meditation is reduction of hyperactivity of the amygdala that is the alarm bell of the brain that leads to fight-or-flight reaction. Too much of the amygdala usage is related to panic attacks and anxiety disorders. Moreover, it enhances the relationship between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala and enables the upper-level mind to have control over the lower-level

emotional reactions. Another important outcome is growth in the hippocampus which is essential in learning and memory as well as in emotional regulation. A study conducted by Holzel et al. (2011) revealed that meditation can produce positive results on the hippocampus gray matter density positively affecting the learning ability of a student. Insula activation enhances the sense of interoception (students can more easily acknowledge the feelings that are manifested in physical sensations) (Dhammasiri Thero, 2020, pp. 234-256).

Meditation and Academic Efficiency

Studies have always ascertained that meditation has a direct and positive impact on school performance of students. In a study by Mrazek et al. (2013) that involved university students it was established that a four-week mindfulness training program had a critical reading ability and working memory capacity standardized test score improvement that was significant. The researchers mentioned that there was an improvement of test scores by 16 percent and an increase of working memory capacity by 30 percent. This is a strong argument of the

direct academic success that is brought about by meditation.

Learning is based on attention and without it, there can be no processing, understanding, remembering, and application of information in practice. But, nowadays, in the age of technologies, distraction has turned into a significant crisis. According to research conducted by Microsoft, the average attention span of a human has reduced to less than 8 seconds compared to 12 seconds in the year 2000. This is said to be less than the attention span of a goldfish, which is a huge setback to the student who has to have uninterrupted concentration to learn and grasp intricate ideas and concepts.

Meditation improves the sustenance and selective attention. In a recent study conducted by MacLean et al. (2010), after three months of intensive meditation training, the attentional blink; a momentary lapse in attention during the processing of strings of information at high rate, is reduced. In addition, meditation helps in enhancing memory. Jha et al. (2010) also conducted research to confirm that mindfulness training is

associated with an increase in the working memory capacity, the mental system that temporarily stores and processes information. Working memory is involved in all cognitive processes, including mathematical problems, being able to maintain the context of a sentence when reading or in a prolonged argument, following the argument. The ability is improved by meditation and defends against the impairment that is normally caused by psychological pressure (Jayawardena, 2019, pp. 178-201).

The Long-term Advantages of Student Life

In addition to the short-term benefits, meditation imparts long-term skills into life, such as emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, resilience, and interpersonal skills (Ranasinghe, 2020, pp. 89-105). One of the ideas that have gained popularity courtesy of Daniel Goleman is the Emotional Intelligence which has been revealed to be more critical in determining student success than IQ. Meditation forms the essential aspects of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship management, and

motivation. When the students learn to recognize and manage their emotions and those of other people, then they are equipped not only with academic, but with life success as a whole.

Resilience — the capacity to recover after failures and difficulties — is required in the study life where failures and lacks in examinations and rejection are frequent. Students who are very resilient perceive them as learning experiences but lowly resilient students may end up in an experience of depression or anxiety. Resilience is developed through meditation as it transforms the way of response to problems; the vision of *Anicca* (impermanence) teaches students to define failure as a temporary phenomenon, and the concept of *Anatta* (non-self) makes a student less personal about failures (Wijekumara, 2020, pp. 201-234).

Guidelines of practical meditation among students

The amount of time spent on the practice of meditation can be implemented by the students as 5-10 minutes per day, then adding 20-30 minutes. Regularity is more

valuable than time, 10 minutes in a day is healthier than an hour a week. *ÔnApAnasati* can be commenced by sitting comfortably and in a quiet area, the students keep their eyes closed and monitor the natural breath. Once the mind goes away, as it does, call it back to the breath. It is not a failure but the act of returning the mind because it helps to train the attention muscle (Dhammarama Thero, 2017, pp. 34-48).

Mindfulness is also to be exercised in the day-to-day activities. During meals, students are not to be distracted by the electronics so much as they need to concentrate on taste, smell, and feel of food they are eating. They must experience the movement and the surroundings during the walking. Other technologies such as the Pomodoro (25 minutes of concentration with 5 minutes break) may be integrated with mindfulness in the studies (Wijeratne, 2019, pp. 67-84).

Conscious technology consumption is also important. Pausing and questioning oneself on why they are looking at something, the students should examine a smartphone before doing so. The habit of opening social media at a

specific time without notifications, and ceasing to use the device 1-2 hours before bed, is a significant enhancement of the quality of sleep.

Overcoming Obstacles to Meditation

The usual barriers are the time constraint, sleepiness, distractions, anticipation of immediate outcomes, and the lack of direction.

- Time: Meditation ought to be viewed as an investment rather than the time wastage. Even 20 minutes of meditation will be time-saving since it will be more efficient in academic performance in the future. It can also become an element of the current routine, e.g. a shower, a commute (Ratnayake, 2018, pp. 89-112).
- Drowsiness: The eyes can be kept open, one can sit up straight, keep the surroundings well-ventilated or can meditate through walking (Nyanaratne Thero, 2016, pp. 56-72).
- Vagrancy of Mind: This is a natural thing. It is not aimed at halting the mind but to observe its

character. This is likened to a hunter awaiting wildlife; the meditator merely watches thoughts like they appear without judging them (Dhammajiva Thero, 2017, pp. 112-134).

- Expectation of Results: Expectation of the results of Meditation is just like mastering an instrument; it develops over time. A perfect session should not be expected on a daily basis but instead the process should be taken into concern.

To feel better, students may turn to more experienced teachers, join meditation clubs at universities, or use the Headspace, Calm, or Insight Timer applications. Articles by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Jack Kornfield and local Sinhalese literature are all good sources (Amarawansa, 2019, pp. 67-89).

One of the biggest misunderstandings is that meditation is a religious venture. Although it has its roots in the Buddhist tradition, it is practically a psychological tool that can be available to anyone of any religious belief. It is consistent with profound contemplative philosophy of Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. It is simply a way to

be mindful in the present and emotionally perceptive, in the case of secular students (Kumarasinghe, 2020, pp. 178-201).

To conclude, meditation can be used as a comprehensive answer to the usual problems of student life. It plays a significant role in the alleviation of psychological pressure, enhancement of concentration, emotional control, development of relationships, and long-term well-being. Hence, meditation is a life skill that the 21 st -century student should possess.

Conclusion

The paper has defined the complex psychological and educational issues of the student life and has both scientifically and practically evaluated the effectiveness of meditation as a holistic and sustainable intervention. The primary and secondary sources of data have evidently substantiated that the main Buddhist meditation techniques such as *SatipatthAna, ÔnApAnasati, MettA, Samatha,* and *VipassanA* are very useful in maintaining

student attention, concentration, emotional control, mental health, and academic performance.

The current research in neuroscience has made use of different scans to prove that meditation triggers structural and functional alterations in the brain which is a great example that scientifically validates the power of the meditation taught by the Buddha in the *Tripitaka* more than 2,600 years ago. In particular, the improvement of Prefrontal Cortex functioning, low activity in fear and anger areas of the brain (the Amygdala), high Gray Matter Density, less hyperactivity of the Default Mode Network, and higher sustained attention have a direct consequence on the mental health and academic achievements of students. It is a great illustration of Neuroplasticity, the brain capacity to reorganise itself with the help of experience and training, as it demonstrates that meditation is not a mental activity only, but a powerful intervention, which causes physical changes in the brain.

The skills learnt in meditation are life-long skills and not short-term benefits. It equips students with Emotional

Intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, resilience and interpersonal skills which make them successful not only in their academic activities but also in their professional and personal lives in general. These are the abilities that one will need in the 21st century, which is quickly evolving, uncertain, and complicated world. Moreover, meditation offers lifetime stress management tools, emotional control, and interpersonal conflict resolution, which is essential in professional success in the future.

Practically speaking, the introduction of meditation in the routine life of students is not hard or complicated. One can start with brief sessions of 5-10 minutes daily and build up; *ÔnApAnasati*, *Metta* meditation and mindfulness in the day-to-day life are very easy but effective ways. Meditation can be practiced by any student without any special equipment, costly classes, and long-term plans and provide the results in the nearest future. Through a consistent practice, meditation will be part of the way of life.

There are some practical suggestions that can be offered on how meditation can be formally used in the Sri Lankan education system. They involve the implementation of meditation programs in schools and universities (e.g., a 5-10-minute Mindfulness practice in the morning assembly) and incorporating meditation into the student counselling services, as well as workshops to teach meditation to teachers and parents. Also, they could have special meditation programs during exams to experience less anxiety; Mindfulness and mental well-being must be taught in the school program, and calm places or meditation room must be created in schools along with promotion of student Meditation Clubs (Perera and Jayasinghe, 2021, pp. 234-256). Since the concept of mindfulness is already included in the school curriculum in such countries as the UK, USA, and Australia, Sri Lanka should not be left behind.

Various things are to be taken into account when transferring research findings to policy. Meditation programs must be done voluntarily but not forcefully, respecting students' religious or cultural beliefs. The

teachers of meditation should be well trained; meditation should be applied as an addition to medical treatment and not as an alternative to it. Professional mental health services should refer students with serious mental health problems (Ratnayake and Herath, 2020, pp. 178-203).

However, in a conclusive study, it is a fact that meditation is an excellent and efficient instrument in the success and well-being of student life in general. The 2,600-year-old Buddhist teachings have been proven right by the latest 21st century scientific discoveries, which leaves no doubts that meditation is among important life skills of modern and future generations of students. Meditation is more than a choice for those in the present generation who are dealing with modern pressures like examinations, technological changes, pre-eminence of social media and uncertainty about the future. This study can be of practical use to educational policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students in Sri Lanka to integrate meditation as part of student life and also could form a basis in future research.

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